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THE NEGRO WORKER

THE NEGRO WORKER

THE WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION AND RACE RELATIONS

Alfred Edgar Smith
February 1943

Pre - WPA

WPA Employment

Race Relations

PRE - WPA

It was definitely established 1933 to 1935, that Negroes, rural and urban, Northern and Southern, were present in disproportionate numbers on the relief rolls, and likely to remain so. Constituting 9.7 percent of the general population (1930 Census), they were 16.7 percent of the relief population. The first general Unemployment Relief Census (October 1933) indicated 17.8 percent of the total Negro population was on relief. A pre-WPA inventory (January 1935) revealed this percentage had risen to 25.5. As relief cases, they averaged one-sixth of the total throughout the period. As relief persons, one of every four Negroes was on relief in contrast to one of every eight whites. (*)

Disproportion was especially pronounced in urban areas. The percentage of the urban Negro population receiving relief varied little and was nearly three times that of the urban white population. In rural areas, with the exception of the North where rural Negroes were relatively few, differences between colored and white relief population proportions were slight. However, there are rural factors deserving consideration. Censuses were usually conducted during the cotton-picking season when most rural Negro workers were at least temporarily off the rolls. Also, until the farm-tenant system became drastically dislocated, most Negroes

(*) For documentation see classified bibliography, by topic, in appendix.

in the rural South were traditionally limited to such "furnishing" and relief as was provided by land-owner patrons.

Geographically, only 60 percent of Negro relief cases was in the South although approximately three-fourths of the Negro population was in this section. The surprising 40 percent of the Negro relief population in the North and West consisted of concentrations of Negro workers in large urban industrial areas, a consequence of World War and later, worker migration from the South.

Reasons for the disproportionate representation of Negroes on the relief rolls are socio-economic and generally familiar. However, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, concerned with the disclosure by its own Research Division that "while Negroes were added to the relief rolls in a proportion twice as great as whites through loss of private employment, they were removed from the rolls through reemployment only half as frequently", conducted further study. It was confirmed that Negroes were concentrated in those economic groups contributing most heavily to the relief rolls. They were the first fired and last hired in private industry, and generally received lower wages than white workers for identical work. They were being displaced from traditionally "Negro jobs" by white workers, while concurrently some industry and some unions barred them openly. The farm-tenant system was disintegrating. Negro business, small and inadequate, was in desperate straits. There was unbelievably little provision for Negro unemployables. In short, Negroes were forced to seek aid from the relief agencies because of all the reasons which affect white persons plus a number which affect Negroes alone.

Investigations also shed light on the relative instability of Negro family life,- high incidence of broken families and one person families. Curiously, however, it was disclosed that the Negro's percentage of the transient population was smaller than his percentage of the general population. Only in the unattached transient group was he 7 to 12 percent of the total. Depression-born movement was largely rural-to-urban concentration. "Stranded populations" of Negroes in some depressed industrial areas remained as relics of World War I South-to-North migration, but these were relatively few, and experimental efforts toward their rehabilitation, enjoying but indifferent success, were taken over by the Rural Resettlement Administration.

Civil Works Administration's experiences, coupled with plans for limiting Federal relief to employables, led to intensive investigation in three additional fields:- Disability and Unemployability, Alleged Refusals of Relief Clients to Accept Private Jobs When Offered, and Fare of Relief Cases Removed From the Rolls for Administrative Reasons. It was indicated that although white males showed a higher prevalence of disabilities than Negro males, lack of State and community facilities for care of Negro unemployables, worked a distinct hardship on some Negro relief cases removed from the rolls. Careful investigation in seven selected areas indicated that refusals of Negro relief clients to take offered private employment were justified in every instance because of "impossible" wages or conditions. Rural "problem-area" surveys conducted in the South indicated that even those Negro cases habituated to a life-time of "furnishing", preferred employment to direct relief.

Under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration Negro clients received direct relief benefits in form of cash; food and rent orders; surplus commodities; clothing; garden seed; and free legal, medical and dental aid. They were saved from eviction and given opportunity to secure better housing at cheaper rentals, and to purchase some foodstuffs at less than retail price. In the Education Program, they fared exceptionally well. Toward the end of the pre-WPA era Negroes were accepted readily as teachers in all sections, and the Negro case worker was gradually replacing the white worker with colored clients. However, pre-WPA work relief employment for the Negro was confined for the most part to unskilled work.

Advent of the Works Progress Administration found approximately 3,300,000 Negroes on relief, January 1935, estimated to be from 25.5 to 26.9 percent of the total Negro population. For company they had some 14.5 percent of the white population. A thirty-seven-State sample indicated 950,000 of the Negro workers on relief eligible for employment on work relief or in private industry.

Removal of unemployables from the rolls reduced the average age of Negroes below that of comparable whites. The 395,000 Negro female eligible workers were 41.8 of all Negro eligibles, reflecting the preponderance of families with female heads among Negroes. Contrasted, white females were only 25.2 percent of white eligibles.

Occupationally, unskilled, farm, and personal service workers made up 67 percent of Negro male eligibles. Semi-skilled workers were 17 percent, skilled workers 7 percent, and white collar and professional workers

workers only 2.8 percent. Among Negro female eligibles, domestic and personal workers constituted 57 percent, while white collar and professional workers accounted for but 2 percent.

As the Works Progress Administration got under way, one-sixth or 16.7 percent of the persons on relief eligible for employment on its projects were Negroes. Almost half of these were women. And the most of them, male and female, were unskilled and inexperienced.

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WPA EMPLOYMENT

Employment of Negro workers on WPA projects and projects manned from the WPA rolls, in general, followed WPA employment trends. However, the same factors contributing to the disproportionate representation of Negroes on relief rolls, tended to keep them relatively static on WPA. Their representation was in inverse ratio to increase and decrease of the rolls.

The average Negro representation on WPA was 15.0 percent, a figure midway between their general relief representation, - 20.0 percent, - and their general population representation, - 10.0 percent. In 1936, and 1938-39, when WPA rolls soared above the three million mark, Negro workers were approximately 12.5 to 13.0 percent of the total load, and since the figures are estimations from samples it is possible they were even lower. In 1937, and subsequent to mid 1940, they were from 16.0 to 20.0 percent. In 1943 it is probable they are between 25.0 and 40.0 percent.

In number, Negro WPA workers ranged from a 1938 high of approximately 450,000 to a late-1942 low of 71,870.

		<u>Negro Workers</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
1936	High	400,000	13.0
1937	Low	225,000	16.0
1938	High	450,000	12.0
1939	Average	350,000	14.0
1940	"	250,000	15.0
1941	"	225,000	17.0
1942	Low	71,000	20.0

WPA statisticians caution that complete censuses were difficult to take, and notably "inaccurate" because large scale assignments, transfers, and terminations changed the picture daily. Racially, the picture was affected by seasonal employment of Negroes in rural areas.

Early WPA employment for Negro workers was concentrated in the unskilled manual labor categories, in keeping with their work records. Later as it became apparent that work records were not always a true indication of training and that Negro white collar and professional workers on the rolls in disproportionate numbers frequently had had opportunity to do nothing but unskilled work, new types of projects were devised. The Recreation, Educational, Federal Writers' and Federal Arts Programs provided considerable employment and training opportunity, and it was soon apparent that the public services offered were of a value to the Negro public equal to that extended to Negro WPA workers. This was also true of construction type projects. For example, construction of a playground and swimming pool, etc. in many a community, and the operation of the facilities with a WPA worker staff, provided the first acquaintance with organized recreation for local Negroes. Also by 1940, the WPA literacy program had so reduced illiteracy in the South that the Census considered it no longer necessary to include information as to literacy on its schedules.

In summary it may be noted that as workers Negroes benefitted from wages, vocational training, work experience, and conservation of skills and morale. The Negro public derived peculiar benefits from construction projects as school buildings, stadiums, athletic fields, swimming

and wading pools, community center buildings, playgrounds, walks, gutters, and streets and roads. Non-construction projects included a free lunch program, housekeeping aide service, nursing service, clinical service, nursery schools, and access to sewing room products. Old records were modernized as in Land Grant Colleges in the South, clerical aide was provided schools, books catalogued, every type of social, economic and educational survey conducted, classes provided for adults, workers and pre-school children, supervised play, art centers and galleries, preservation of folk tunes and free entertainment by the Federal Theater Project. Library service was extended to Negroes in some sections for the first time. A central catalogue of material on Negroes all over the country was assembled at Howard University. Federal Writers' Guides were issued dealing exclusively with Negroes as, Negro in Virginia, Drums and Shadows, Survey of Negroes in Little Rock and North Little Rock, Cavalcade of the American Negro, etc. A National shrine was made of the old Frederick Douglas home in Anacostia, D. C., where buildings were restored and renovated, relics catalogued, and grounds landscaped.

Later year training and reemployment programs aided in breaking down various barriers, real and artificial, against free employment of Negro labor in defense, government and other industry.

In 1943, successful Negro writers as Richard Wright (author of "Native Son"); successful artists as Charles Alston, (now an OWI artist); successful actors, artisans, teachers, nurses, map tracers, statisticians, typists, and the like, owe their success to opportunity for employment, training and experience on WPA projects. No Negro neighborhood but does not bear the improvement imprint of WPA.

1935

In March, 906,356 Negro workers were seeking employment on WPA projects. Negroes, 9.7 percent of the total population, 11.0 percent of gainful workers, 16.7 percent of the general relief population, were 15.5 percent of relief workers. Their over-representation as relief workers, while greater than as gainful workers, was less than on general relief rolls.

Inexperienced persons and persons of unknown occupations numbered 133,607. The remaining 772,749 Negro relief workers, compared to white workers (*) were concentrated in urban areas. Seventy-nine percent of Negro and 63.0 percent of white relief workers were residents of cities, 21.0 percent of Negro and 37.0 percent of white workers lived in rural areas. Over half of all Negro relief workers were located in eight states,- New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, North Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. Comparison of relief worker populations with 1930 gainful worker populations in these and other states, reveals worker-migration patterns as well as state differentials in fertility and mortality.

Negro females, 33.6 percent of all Negro gainful workers, were 36.3 percent of all Negro relief workers. They were 15.7 percent of all female gainful workers, and 30.4 percent of all female relief workers. Customarily forced to seek employment out of the home, Negro females were forced to seek relief employment in greater proportion than white females.

Negro relief workers of both sexes combined showed some concentration in the middle or 25-44 age group, and their average was younger than

(*) Here the relatively few workers of races other than white or Negro have been treated as white.

that of comparable whites. Intra-racially, Negro males dominated the 45-64 age group, and Negro females the 16-24 group. Subsequent to removal of obvious unemployables from the relief rolls, elderly Negro males were still being added to the rolls in disproportionate numbers.

By class of occupation, 82.9 percent, or 634,380 of experienced Negro workers were manual non-agricultural workers. Only 38,530 of these were skilled workers, the balance unskilled, semi-skilled, and domestic and personal service workers. Agricultural workers numbered 115,951, or 14.07 percent. White collar workers numbered only 22,418, or 3.03 percent. Interestingly, these Negro workers were 18.9 percent of all manual workers, 12.1 percent of all agricultural workers, and 4.07 percent of all white collar workers. Comparison with their gainful worker population reveals Negro relief workers over-represented in every class of occupation except agricultural worker.

Negro relief workers had been on relief rolls longer than comparable whites, but because of their concentration in unskilled and domestic service groups their period of unemployment in usual occupation was shorter than was that of whites. Younger Negroes of both sexes had longer unemployment than whites, and female Negroes were jobless longer than whites in all age groups except 55-64.

Negro relief families were smaller than comparable white relief families. The disproportionately small number of Negro economic family heads usually employed at white collar work or in agriculture, reflected both the lower economic and social status of the Negro and under-representation of

Negro workers on rural relief rolls. Women, largely of the servant class, constituted almost one-fourth of the Negro economic heads, as compared to less than one-tenth of the white.

Proportionately twice as many Negro relief workers, as compared with whites, had not completed one year of education. Relatively one-half as many Negroes as white obtained eight or more years of schooling.

By the last three months of the year WPA project employment for Negro relief workers had assumed definite patterns. Late-year sample estimates placed the Negro WPA load as approximately 11 percent of the total. Of every hundred Negro WPA workers assigned, 87 were employed at common labor, 11 at semi-skilled work, and 1 at white collar work. Skilled employment was negligible. Contrasted with white workers, 12 percent of eligible experienced Negro white collar relief workers had received assignment, and 32 percent of the whites. Only 4 percent of eligible Negro skilled workers were employed, and 17 percent of whites.

Student aid was taken over by the National Youth Administration, and assistance extended to Negro high school and graduate students as well as college students.

Project employment opportunities for Negro women proved a major administrative problem. Sewing room projects were over worked, and proved unsatisfactory for inexperienced, and "farm" women. Training schools for domestic service workers were devised as the year ended, and were planned for 21 States, New York City, and the District of Columbia. Light manual labor projects were also devised for women with farm-work and labor backgrounds. These projects, called "Beautification Projects", involved leaf raking, planting of small shrubs, and the like.

The Works Progress Administration was criticized bitterly as the year closed. Lack of "adequate project employment opportunities" for Negro skilled and white collar workers, and Negro women, were the chief points at issue. The "Beautification Projects" were subjects of violent attack by both white and Negro press. It was pointed out by Negro leaders that eligible experienced Negro workers constituted 15.5 percent of the potential WPA load, but only 11 percent of the actual load.

1936

There was an approximate average of 400,000 Negro workers employed on WPA projects or projects manned from WPA rolls during 1936. As the Work Program rolls fluctuated between a February high of 3,800,000 and a late year low of 2,500,000, there was no actual census of Negro workers, but it is accepted that they varied from 500,000 to 300,000 and were approximately 14 percent of the total. One of every six workers was a Negro.

In December, Negro workers were 42.0 percent of the total in Alabama, 33.9 percent in Georgia, and 12 percent in New York City. It is significant that the proportion of 1935 "eligible workers" actually employed on the Work Program in late 1936, was the same for Negroes and whites, approximately three-fourths for each group.

As expected the bulk of Negro workers was in unskilled manual categories, as illustrated by project distribution of the 12,011 Negro workers in Georgia:

Highways, roads and streets	3,930
Public Buildings	743
Recreational facilities	318
Conservation	141
Utilities	2,717
Rural Electrification	1
Transportation	871
Professional, technical, clerical and education	711
Sewing	1,352
Miscellaneous	1,227

However, the Federal Arts Projects gradually afforded additional opportunities for white collar and professional workers, and two national research projects were sponsored by the Department of the Interior and Office of Education, manned completely by Negro workers. A Public Works Administration clause in its Housing Construction Regulations, compelled the employment of a proportionate number of Negro skilled workers, who were usually from WPA rolls.

Effect of seasonal employment, customarily removing large numbers of Negro workers from the rolls, was counteracted by the drought emergency. Although the NYA absorbed 20,000 Negro youth 16-25 on its work projects, employed and housed 400 Negro girls in its camps, and sent another 26,000 Negro youths to high school and college, and the CCC reported 40,000 Negro boys in its camps, WPA rolls were depleted but little. Return of an increasing number of employment opportunities in private industry did not, as expected, affect Negro project workers, and USES placements were confined for the most part to short-period domestic and personal service work.

At the end of the year, seven States had Negro administrative employees on State staffs, and Negro project supervisors were no longer uncommon. Negro workers became something of an asset to WPA as their Federal Theater, choral and instrumental groups initiated a new era. It was apparent that neither a presidential election or returning prosperity influenced the Negroes' need for WPA employment.

1937

By September, 1937, quota reductions had reduced the WPA rolls to approximately a million and a half persons. Based on a complete WPA census conducted in the Southern States and some sample areas, it is estimated Negro workers numbered 225,080, and were 15.2 percent of the total. The National Unemployment Census, taken in November 1937, indicated 252,893 Negro "Emergency" workers among the 1,089,707 Negro unemployed persons. These emergency workers included WPA, NYA and CCC workers, and over half were in cities of over 100,000 population. Negro emergency workers were 12.6 percent of all emergency workers.

On WPA, Negro women, numbering 73,080, were 28.0 percent of all women project workers. Negro men, numbering 152,000, were 12.5 percent of all men.

A census was taken in twelve Southern States where Negro workers were 27.5 percent of the total:

	<u>Negro Workers</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Alabama	5,572	30.5
Arkansas	2,639	14.7
Florida	5,101	22.2
Georgia	5,841	28.6
Louisiana	8,906	40.1
Mississippi	2,730	17.2
North Carolina	4,165	22.1
Oklahoma	4,914	13.2
South Carolina	4,231	27.9
Tennessee	3,266	17.5
Texas	6,790	15.8
Virginia	4,241	25.9

To these may be added a census from New Jersey:

New Jersey	8,736	15.5
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It is also interesting to note the urban concentration of Negro WPA workers as represented by proportions in Washington, D. C., and New York City:

Washington, D. C.	5,838	72.2
New York City	18,921	14.1

Quarterly study of statistics in sample areas indicated that the percentage Negro of the total WPA load invariably increased as the rolls decreased. This was generally taken as evidence that Negro workers leaving the rolls were more likely to seek reemployment on projects because of inability to find private employment, than were comparable whites.

Negro workers largely concentrated in unskilled WPA work gradually entered new fields as the program became more diversified. Oklahoma reported 965 Negro workers employed as follows:

Recreation	41
Furniture repair	36
Sewing	635
Housekeeping Aides	127
Library Service	24
Hot School Lunch	1
Excavating Indian Mounds	1
Cleaning public buildings	29
Music (Federal)	14
Federal Theater	1
Adult Education	68
Federal Writers	2
Correspondence Study	1

In the District of Columbia 250 Negro clerical workers were employed on projects sponsored by the Recorder of Deeds, 15 at tabulation work for the Department of Agriculture, 32 for the Department of the Interior, 20 at statistical work for the Board of Education. Recreation grew to rival education as a field for concentration of college trained Negroes on relief. Federal Arts prospered as Negro individuals achieved fame, and four extension art galleries were set up for Negroes in the South.

However, supervisory jobs fell off as the rolls decreased and a number of all-Negro projects were discontinued. Nine States employed Negroes on administrative staffs, and the staff of the Race Relations Office in the Central Works Progress Administration grew to eleven. New York City and the District of Columbia set up Negro Advisory Committees for consultation on race matters.

Entrance of the Works Progress Administration in the placement field apparently benefitted Negroes little except in the matter of seasonal employment mostly on farms, and as domestic workers. Investigations of complaints that Negro women were being forced to accept domestic employment at pain of losing their WPA jobs revealed that there was no uniformity in interpretation of "reasonable conditions" and "usual rate of pay".

Resettlement Administration gave up attempts to assist in employment of Negro women in rural areas. In Louisiana, the practice of half-time employment for some Negro women workers persisted, wherein one WPA wage sufficed to pay two workers. The workers defended the practice, pointing out the halved wage exceeded domestic wages, and the hours were exceedingly short.

The Flood Emergency in January and February, and later-year quota reductions gave rise to charges of discrimination against Negro workers in spite of the non-discriminatory clause inserted in the 1937 Emergency Relief Act.

1938

As WPA rolls skyrocketed above the three million mark, Negro workers 400,000 strong, were 13.3 percent of the total at the end of the year. Estimations indicate they numbered 350,000 in early year, and 450,000 during the

October peak. An accurate September census in the eleven deep-South States where Negro workers numbering 137,000, were 24.5 percent of the total, indicated a 157 percent increase since September 1937. Comparable increase for whites in the region was 140 percent.

Toward the end of the year, 32.4 percent of all Negro workers were women. In the South 9 percent of the Negro workers were employed on Women's and Professional Projects. In the District of Columbia, the 7,645 Negro workers were 62.5 percent of the total, 1,182 of them women.

Teachers on educational projects numbered 4,100 in thirty-six States, nursery school workers 600, and 29 highly trained Negro workers served as education supervisors. There were 259 recreational instructors and supervisors, and in the South, Negro recreational workers were 25 percent of the total.

Negro workers also found considerable employment as non-relief workers as the rolls swelled. Creation of numerous all-Negro projects increased the number of Negro foremen and project managers. A few additional State and District offices hired Negro administrative workers. There were 81 Negro workers in all classifications in the Central Washington Office. Alabama followed New York City and Washington, D. C., and appointed a Negro Advisory Committee.

Excellent studies,- WPA, general government, and private,- were published, providing informative data on the Negro worker and general socio-economics among the Negro population. Typical:

Negroes in the District of Columbia
Sarah Ginsberg
Section of Report of Investigation of Public Relief
in the District of Columbia.

Report on the Economic Conditions of the South.
National Emergency Council Report to the President.

The Urban Negro Worker in the U. S. 1925-1936.
An Interior Department-sponsored WPA project finding,- Survey
of the Training and Employment of White Collar and Skilled
Negro Workers.

Effects of the Works Program on Rural Relief.
WPA Research Monograph No. XIII.

Complaints of race discrimination charged some denial of certification, forcing of Negro women into domestic service, denial of white collar assignments, and continuance of the part-time two-workers-to-a-salary practice in New Orleans. The 1938 Emergency Relief Act retained the non-discriminatory clause.

1939

Negro workers averaged 300,000 during the year, and were approximately 14 percent of the total as the rolls decreased. The February review of need survey indicated 385,110 Negro workers certified for continued employment. These were 14.2 percent of all workers on the payrolls who were certified for continued employment. Negro workers were distributed as follows:

<u>Region 1</u>	<u>Negro Workers</u>	<u>Percent of all Workers</u>
Connecticut	1,173	5.0
Maine	6	0.1
Massachusetts	1,739	1.5
New Hampshire	5	0.1
Rhode Island	589	3.9
Vermont	12	0.2
<u>Region 2</u>		
New Jersey	11,575	14.2
New York	29,657	14.0
Pennsylvania	20,260	9.0

<u>Region 3</u>	<u>Negro Workers</u>	<u>Percent of all Workers</u>
Delaware	1,030	32.4
District of Columbia	7,104	66.8
Maryland	3,948	28.0
Virginia	7,863	28.2
West Virginia	2,132	4.7

<u>Region 4</u>		
Illinois	42,426	20.0
Indiana	11,474	12.9
Michigan	21,301	15.7
Missouri	16,486	17.5
Ohio	37,855	16.0

<u>Region 5</u>		
Alabama	14,503	29.8
Florida	11,092	23.5
Georgia	21,348	36.9
Kentucky	4,142	7.4
North Carolina	12,067	26.9
South Carolina	18,295	39.2
Tennessee	8,187	16.0

<u>Region 6</u>		
Arkansas	7,826	16.1
Louisiana	17,932	38.7
Mississippi	9,684	22.8
Oklahoma	8,137	13.8
Texas	17,413	18.0

<u>Region 7</u>		
Iowa	831	2.9
Kansas	4,252	13.6
Minnesota	643	1.1
Nebraska	1,357	4.9
North Dakota	8	0.1
South Dakota	15	0.1
Wisconsin	1,425	2.1

<u>Region 8</u>		
Colorado	575	2.1
Idaho	27	0.3
Montana	98	0.6
New Mexico	15	0.1
Utah	40	0.3
Wyoming	41	1.1

<u>Region 9</u>	<u>Negro Workers</u>	<u>Percent of all Workers</u>
Arizona	717	7.2
California	7,381	6.8
Nevada	15	0.7
Oregon	66	0.4
Washington	333	0.7

In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania there were 5,524 Negro workers, Baltimore 3,117, New York City 25,667, and Chicago 31,922 in February.

By October rolls were low, but Alabama reported:

"An interesting fact of Negro employment by WPA in Alabama is shown from figures compiled by the State statistician. The 1930 Census of Alabama shows a Negro population of 35.7 percent. WPA employment figures indicate that 34.1% of all persons employed by WPA in the State are Negroes, slightly over one percent difference. Employment figures also show that 35.2% of all certified persons on WPA in Alabama are Negroes and 35.9% of all male persons employed are Negroes. Since last year the proportion of Negro employment in Alabama has increased from 27% to 34.1%." (*)

The Thirty Day Layoffs ordered by Congress seemed to affect Negro workers peculiarly and were subject of a sample survey conducted by the Race Relations Office. (**) It was indicated that forces militating against free employment of Negro workers in private industry, and the lack of adequate relief programs in many areas, made the Negro dependent upon WPA employment to a degree much greater than were whites.

The Negro units of the Federal Theater achieved renown, and tangible evidence of benefit to Negro neighborhoods and public as well as workers, began to accumulate, - schools, roads, playgrounds, housing, etc.

(*) Alabama State Report to Central Office, October 9, 1939.

(**) A Typewritten Confidential Study. See Bibliography.

1940

As WPA rolls continued a gradual decline to less than two million workers, Negroes numbered some 250,000. In September, an estimation based on samples, indicated 253,492 Negro workers, approximately 15% of the total.

A May census in eleven Southern States disclosed 100,234 Negro workers, 22.9% of the total. 15,457 of these workers were on Professional and Service Projects, and were 13.1 percent of all such workers. The balance of the Negro workers were employed in Operations,- Construction.

In March, New York City reported:

"The average age of Negro employees was 36.2 years or 3.4 years below the average age of all employees. The majority of Negro employees was also concentrated in the 25-44 age group, with 65.2 per cent of the total employees coming within these age limits. The proportion of Negro employees under 25 years of age amounted to 11.6 per cent; 16.8 per cent were between 45 and 54 years old; 6 per cent were between 55 and 64, and 0.4 per cent were 65 years of age or older. Comparisons with previous data indicate proportionate increases in the number of Negro employees under 25 years of age, between 45 and 54 years and 55 to 64 years. The proportion of Negro employees between 25 and 44 years of age declined.

"The normal occupations of Negro WPA employees, prior to their acceptance on the WPA, were concentrated mainly in the unskilled group, over half (53.3 per cent) of the Negro workers being in this group. Semi-skilled occupations accounted for 23.1 per cent of Negro workers and white collar occupations accounted for 16.1 per cent. The remainder or 7.5 per cent were formerly skilled workers."

The Defense Training Program got under way, and by August 2,367 of the total 25,284 trainees were Negroes; although there were none on training programs in Florida, Kentucky, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Texas, Maryland, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Virginia, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Nevada. By November, 4,303 Negro trainees were classified as follows:

		<u>Percent of Total</u>
Enrolled in Training Courses	2,848	10.6
Separated, Unsited for Training	335	7.0
Known to have Obtained other Employment	220	3.7
Voluntarily Separated, Reason Unknown	148	6.2
Employed on other WPA Projects	431	5.9
All Other	321	12.0

Compared to white trainees, a disproportionate number of colored workers who completed training courses were unable to secure private employment and were reemployed on other WPA projects. In some cases Negro trainees were allowed to remain on training projects for double the regular period.

1941

Negro workers numbering 236,636, were 16.3 percent of the 1,451,755 WPA workers at the end of April. Female Negroes numbered 39,197, male 197,439. Their median age was 41.14.

They were 43.3 percent of the total in Louisiana, South Carolina 42.9 percent, Delaware 34.2 percent, Maryland 32.4 percent, Alabama 30.8 percent, Illinois 22.6 percent, Ohio 22.1 percent, Michigan 19.5 percent, Pennsylvania 16.8 percent. In the District of Columbia they were 68.9 percent, and in New York City 22.0 percent.

In the eleven Southern States 95,576 Negro workers were 24.5 percent of the total. They numbered 100,234 in 1940 and were only 22.9 percent, indicating the percentage Negro of the local load invariably rises when the rolls decrease. The assumption that this reflected the relative difficulty Negro workers experienced in securing private employment was borne out by United States Employment Service reports, and also by surveys conducted by the WPA Race Relations Office. (*)

(*) Defense Employment and Negro Workers. A confidential typewritten study. April 28, 1941. See Bibliography.

The National Defense Vocational Training Projects increased the number of Negro trainees:

National Defense Vocational Training
Projects - Negro Trainees

	<u>February 1941</u>		<u>June 1941</u>		<u>October 1941</u>	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
Enrolled in Training Classes	3,134	12.0	3,732	-	4,457	13.9
Obtained Other Employment	310	3.4	792	-	4,081	5.9
Voluntarily Separated (Reason Unknown)	237	7.6	482	-	2,211	10.8
Reemployed on WPA Projects	810	7.8	2,005	-	4,269	17.6
All Other	468	12.9	1,100	-	3,249	16.2
Total	4,959	9.5	8,113	-	18,267	11.0

Change from gradual to sudden reductions of the rolls in June was the occasion for charges of race discrimination against Negro workers terminated when whole projects were abolished. Further unrest resulted from inability of Negro workers trained on WPA training projects to secure private employment in defense industry in spite of efforts of various government agencies charged with increasing employment opportunities for minority groups.

1942

Curtailment of the WPA program reduced the number of Negro WPA workers to 71,870 by October 27. In spite of stepping up the training program and active participation of the WPA in the placement field, Negroes tended to

leave the rolls at a much less rapid rate than white workers and in October were 20.3 percent of the WPA total.

NUMBER OF CERTIFIED NEGRO WORKERS EMPLOYED ON WPA PROJECTS AND
PERCENT OF TOTAL CERTIFIED WPA WORKERS REPRESENTED BY NEGROES, BY STATE

October 27, 1942

	Certified WPA Workers	Certified Negro Workers	
		Number	Percent of Total Certified WPA Workers
GRAND TOTAL	354,040	71,870 $\frac{1}{2}$	20.3
CONTINENTAL U. S.	326,049	65,210 $\frac{1}{2}$	20.0
Alabama	7,976	2,696	33.8
Arizona	930	98	10.5
Arkansas	7,389	1,167	15.8
California	7,920	774	9.8
Colorado	1,751	77	4.4
Connecticut	1,182	110	9.3
Delaware	345	109	31.5
District of Columbia	879	575	65.4
Florida	9,217	2,544	27.6
Georgia	10,289	2,840	27.6
Idaho	1,169	5	0.4
Illinois	22,944	6,585	28.7
Indiana	6,683	1,263	18.9
Iowa	3,711	148	4.0
Kansas	3,345	539	16.1
Kentucky	9,784	871	8.9
Louisiana	6,797	2,943	43.3
Maine	590	1	0.2
Maryland	1,536	164	10.7
Massachusetts	15,396	493	3.2
Michigan	11,972	2,837	23.7
Minnesota	6,288	126	2.0
Mississippi	8,437	2,109	25.0
Missouri	12,030	2,322	19.3
Montana	2,118	2	0.1

TABLE - October 27, 1942 - Continued

	Certified WPA Workers	Certified Negro Workers Number	Percent of Total Certified WPA Workers
<u>States - Continued:</u>			
Nebraska	2,316	125	5.4
Nevada	257	2	0.7
New Hampshire	1,091	-	-
New Jersey	11,730	2,498	21.3
New Mexico	2,717	19	0.7
New York City	27,267	8,289	30.4
New York(Excl. N. Y. City)	7,198	576	8.0
North Carolina	7,874	1,898	24.1
North Dakota	803	1	0.1
Ohio	14,778	4,315	29.2
Oklahoma	5,803	1,300	22.4
Oregon	361	-	-
Pennsylvania	26,560	5,259	19.8
Rhode Island	958	52	5.4
South Carolina	8,229	3,061	37.2
South Dakota	1,095	-	-
Tennessee	8,424	531	6.3
Texas	18,106	3,386	18.7
Utah	917	1	0.1
Vermont	423	-	-
Virginia	3,554	707	19.9
Washington	1,200	10	0.8
West Virginia	9,389	807	8.6
Wisconsin	3,914	133	3.4
Wyoming	407	6	1.5
Hawaii	1	-	-
Puerto Rico	27,330	5,985	21.9
Virgin Islands	660	653	99.0

1/ Items for individual states do not exactly add up to the total due to the rounding of percentages. November 27, 1942

At the end of the year when WPA rolls numbered 308,000, Negro

workers were estimated to be approximately 21.5 percent of the total.

RACE RELATIONS

Race discrimination was specifically forbidden from the first in the Federal Emergency Relief Program. FERA Rules and Regulations, Number 3, July 11, 1933, prescribed that "there shall be no discrimination because of race, religion, color, non-citizenship, political affiliation, or because of membership in any special or selected group". CWA regulations contained no restatement of this policy, but in November 1934, complaints of race discrimination in the educational program of the Emergency Relief Program occasioned a directive: "equity demands that educational relief to Negroes be at least at the level of their percentage of their population in each state."⁽¹⁾

In December of the same year, State Administrators had their attention officially called to the desirability of participation by Negro physicians, dentists, and pharmacists in the medical relief work among Negroes "so far as economic limitations and the maintenance of efficient service will allow."⁽²⁾

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- (1) Letter No. E-38, November 2, 1934, to State Relief Administrators and State Chief School Officers.

".....in several areas and states, funds for unemployment relief have not been allotted to projects such as repairs to school buildings, organization of classes under the emergency educational program, and extension of school terms in such a way as to give employment to Negroes in proportion to their probable needs.....officers are expected to distribute funds on a basis of needs with complete equity.....unemployment among educated Negroes is especially acute, Negro teachers should always be employed to teach Negro pupils and Negro adults in states maintaining segregated school programs."

- (2) Letter No. A-71, December 22, 1934, to State Administrators.

"Numerous complaints have been received from all over the country that Negro physicians, dentists and pharmacists are not being given opportunity to participate in the medical relief program in accordance with provision...."

In 1936, at the insistence of Negro leaders through their political representatives, a non-discrimination clause was inserted in the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1937. This made discrimination because of race or other reasons, in connection with employment on WPA projects, a felony punishable by a fine of \$2,000 or imprisonment of not more than two years, or both. This clause has remained a section of subsequent Emergency Relief Appropriations Acts. In 1940, it was reinforced and restated in an added section of the Acts dealing with political activity, and it became unlawful to deprive, attempt to deprive or threaten to deprive WPA workers of their employment because of "race, creed, color, or any political activity."

In 1937, there was further administrative recognition of discrimination on projects, and State Administrators were ordered to assign workers in accordance with law and with no discrimination against them because of "race,
(3)
religion, or political affiliation". In August 1941, State Administrators were apprised of a Presidential Order prohibiting racial discrimination in de-
(4)
fense industry and government employment, and they were cautioned to avoid all possible discrimination in selection and referral of workers for training

(3) Administrative Order No. 44, Section 6-E.

"Workers who are qualified by training and experience to be assigned to work projects and who are eligible as specifically provided by law and by these regulations, shall not be discriminated against on any grounds whatsoever, such as race, religion, or political affiliation."

(4) Presidential Executive Order 8802, June 25, 1941.

".....I do hereby reaffirm the policy of the United States that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government, because of race, creed, color, or national origin, and I do hereby declare that it is the duty of employers and of labor organizations, in furtherance of said policy and of this order, to provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin....."

and employment. Their attention was also redirected to the non-discrimination
(5)
clause in the current Relief Act.

Recognition of the existence of special and peculiar problems incidental to the presence of Negroes on the emergency relief rolls in disproportionate numbers, led to the appointment in January 1934, of a Director of
(6)
Negro Work. His appointment followed a series of petitions and concerted pleas by Negro leaders, and their friends, that such recognition be given. Precedent existed in the presence of "Negro Advisers" and Race Relations Officers" in the Departments of Interior, Commerce, and Justice, and in a few other government agencies.

In making the appointment, the Federal Administrator of FERA deplored the necessity for special group representation, and expressed a hope and belief that efficient administration of the relief program would eventually make
(7)
the maintenance of a Race Relations Office unnecessary. Events were to

(5) Commissioner Letter No. 26, August 9, 1941

".....in this connection it is imperative that in the selection and referral of workers for training and employment, the WPA maintain its established policy of non-discrimination against workers because of race, creed, color, or national origin.....This will also serve to emphasize Section 24 of the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1942.....the intent of this letter shall be immediately brought to the attention of all administrative and supervisory employees....."

(6) Forrester B. Washington, Director of the Atlanta School of Social Work, and a Negro, was appointed by Harry Hopkins, as Director of Negro Work in late January 1934, under the FERA. Mr. Washington served until September 1, 1934, when he resigned to return to active direction of his school.

(7) Forrester B. Washington, in his resignation statement, reminded Mr. Hopkins that Race Relations Office had been "unwanted" and had from the first received little if any encouragement, "due doubtless to Mr. Hopkins' conviction that special group representation was not good social practice in the Emergency Program."

prove him wrong. The Federally conceived and administered relief program did not change to any appreciable degree, patterns of various sections and territories of the country. Rather, as the program gradually tended to decentralize, it tended to conform to local patterns, and in so doing lent itself to traditional practices so far as the races were concerned.

The Director of Negro Work was handed an accumulation of some 2,000 unanswered letters from and concerning Negroes, three-fourth of them addressed to the White House. With the help of a secretary, and a research assistant appointed temporarily and especially for the purpose, ⁽⁸⁾ he retained 1,051 letters which were apparently serious complaints of maladministration and racial discrimination, and forwarded the balance to the Correspondence Division for form-letter replies. The 1,051 letters of complaint were analyzed carefully, with particular attention to the location of the complainants, ⁽⁹⁾ and nature of complaint. This study, supplemented by field investigations of "problem areas", was the basis of advice and recommendations furnished the Administrator and Division Heads, particularly the newly appointed Director of Women's Work.

When on September 1, 1934, the Director of Negro Work tendered his resignation, the Negro Press ignored his public statement that he was doing so in order to resume active direction of the School of Social Work he headed.

(8) At the request of the Director of Negro Work, a Research Assistant was appointed for ten days, to assist him with a study of correspondence. Alfred Edgar Smith was appointed on February 15, 1934, and his appointment made permanent at the expiration of ten days.

(9) A typewritten confidential study, - "Analysis of Letters of Complaint Alleging Discrimination Because of Race". FERA, Office of Director of Negro Work, April 1934.

Mindful of his expressed dissatisfaction with FERA attitudes toward application of the program in the South, his resignation was headlined as a (10)
"protest" against race discrimination in Federal Emergency Relief.

Following this resignation the FERA Administrator was immediately petitioned by Negro leaders, to appoint a successor. A statement given a Washington Tribune Reporter who reached the Administrator by phone, to the effect that Race Relations work would continue under direction of the Assistant to the Director of Negro Work until such time as it could be completely integrated into the program, was variously interpreted. The Negro Press was divided, and some persons apparently believed the work of the Race Relations Office would continue, but under the unsatisfactory guidance of one inexperienced in public affairs. Others saw a determination on the part of the Administrator to abolish all special effort in the Negro's behalf, in accordance with his convictions that special group representation was not necessary. (11)

On October 1, 1934, the Race Relations Office was made a part of the Correspondence Division. The former Assistant to the Director of Negro Work was given the title of Administrative Assistant, and instructed that his duties would primarily concern supervision of replies to thousands of letters

(10) See Negro Press,- Washington Tribune, Baltimore Afro-American, Pittsburgh Courier, Chicago Defender, etc. Mr. Washington was praised for having the courage to resign in protest against race discrimination. Years later, he was still being lauded. See Chicago Defender, November 2, 1942.

(11) See Weekly Negro Press, particularly Washington Tribune, Afro-American, and Courier, for September 1934. Typical headlines: Tribune,- "Denies Work of Washington Has Been Abolished", "No Special Jim Crow Set Up For Negroes Needed, Says Official". Afro-American,- "Washington FERA Post Suddenly Abolished", "FERA Denies New Work Director is Mere Mouthpiece". Courier,- "Smith Succeeds Washington."

of complaint, requests for assistance, and requests for information from and concerning Negroes. Also he was to serve as general adviser to all Divisions of the Administration when and if his services were required.

Meanwhile, the Department of Interior, Office of Education's Specialist in Negro Education was loaned to the FERA as a Consultant, and given an Assistant. (12) Upon recommendation of this Educational Race Relations Officer, and the Director of the Educational Division, the FERA Administrator authorized issuance of a directive against race discrimination in educational relief on November 2, 1934. (13) On December 22, 1934, at the urging of Negro welfare leaders and the Race Relations Office of the United States Public Health Service, the Administrator issued a somewhat similar order directed at discrimination against Negro physicians, dentists, and pharmacists in the medical relief program. (14) Both of these orders acknowledged numerous complaints of racial discrimination in the two fields from all over the country, and most of these complaints made through correspondence passed through the hands of the Administrative Assistant. Nevertheless he was not consulted prior to issuance of the orders.

The Administrative Assistant represented the FERA at several public meetings in late 1934 and early 1935, but the state of race relations administration was uncertain and unsatisfactory. During the confusion of establishing (15)

(12) Dr. Ambrose Caliver, a Negro, and Specialist in Negro Education, Office of Education. James A. Atkins was appointed his Assistant and a full-time FERA employee.

(13) See Foot-note 1, Letter E-38 op. cit.

(14) See Foot-note 2, Letter A-71 op. cit.

(15) One such meeting, - Banquet of Joint Committee on National Recovery, Washington, October 20, 1934.

the Works Progress Administration, the Administrative Assistant busied himself with preparation of four confidential studies designed to present all race factors in Federal Emergency Relief Administration in a form readily useful and usable to the Administrator and Division Heads in the formation of official policy. These studies were read, commented upon, and served a useful purpose. His staff of two persons, - a Secretary and a Correspondence Clerk, carried on office duties.

In mid 1935, the Director of the Labor Relations Section of the WPA Employment Division recommended that the Race Relations Office be removed from the Correspondence Division and made a part of Labor Relations under his general supervision. This plan was put in effect, and another Secretary added to the Race Relations Staff.

By the end of the year, the Administrative Assistant reported handling 6,000 communications, 1,300 of them being complaints serious enough for requesting State investigation and report. He had prepared the first mailing list of Negroes in key positions, had written informational summaries for the press, and conferred with some Federal, Regional and State officials at the Washington office.

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- (16) These four studies served their intent well, and were the base of a later article "Negro and Relief" in the March 1936 FERA Monthly Report, were: "Rural Negro and Rural Rehabilitation", "Reasons for the Disproportionate Number of Negroes on the Relief Rolls", "Negro Labor and Unemployment Relief", and "The Negro and Unemployment Relief, a Bibliography."
- (17) Secretary, - Mrs. Leona M. Cobb. Correspondence Clerk, - Mr. John Whitten.
- (18) Nels Anderson, Director of Labor Relations insisted that Race Relations belonged in his section. Against some opposition from persons who professed to see no need for it, he prevailed, happily, for Race Relations.

Meanwhile, the National Youth Administration had invited Negroes in many sections to serve on its Federal and State Advisory Committees, and in late 1935 appointed an Administrative Assistant to do race relations work (19) in the Central NYA Office.

By the end of 1936, the Administrative Assistant had been given the title of Staff Adviser, or Race Relations Officer, and had a staff of six persons, two acting as assistants and four as secretaries and stenographers. (20)

Elsewhere in the Central WPA Office, the Specialist in Negro Education loaned by the Office of Education, had been withdrawn, but his assistant was appointed in his stead as a full-time WPA employee and given a secretary. In the Federal Writers' Project, a Howard University Professor of English was appointed as Editor of Negro Material, given an Assistant and a secretary. (21) (22) The Statistical Division employed two Negro statisticians.

(19) Miss Juanita Saddler was appointed Director of Negro Work for the NYA in late 1935, and was succeeded by Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, founder and President of Bethune-Cookman College in Florida, in mid 1936. Mrs. Bethune served on the NYA Central Advisory Board prior to her appointment.

(20) In addition to the Correspondence Clerk who had been promoted to a general office Assistant, the Division of Information acknowledged need for a Negro to prepare news releases, exhibits, and other informational material. Edward Lawson was appointed Information Specialist, and placed under the direct supervision of the Race Relations Officer. He was succeeded in April 1938 by Dutton Ferguson, former Editor of Flash Magazine.

(21) Sterling Brown, Professor of English at Howard University in Washington, D. C., served in a part-time Consultant capacity.

(22) Earl Moses and Lewis Allen, statisticians.

Six States and New York City employed nine Negroes in administrative capacities on State WPA staffs. (23)

During the year the Race Relations Officer actually began to function in an administrative capacity. He made several field trips to problem areas and conferred with State officials; he attended Employment Division staff meetings and joined discussions on advisable wage rates and the like; he prepared an article on the Negro and Relief for the FERA Monthly Report. (24)

In the public relations field he supervised preparation of news releases, magazine articles, exhibits and a weekly Press Digest from the Negro press. He represented the WPA at numerous conferences and conventions, prepared mailing lists, issued a news letter twice a month to a selected list of persons interested in furthering the WPA program, and prepared a moving picture in cooperation with Pathe News. (25)

There was little change in 1937. The Race Relations staff remained the same in the Central Office. Two additional States appointed Negroes to their State administrative staffs, and innumerable District Offices made use of them as supervisors. New York City, and for a time Washington, D. C., maintained Negro Advisory Committees which met periodically with WPA officials to discuss best procedure. The Race Relations Officer made field trips to 15 States, and generally served in an administrative and advisory capacity. (26)

(23) North Carolina- One Consultant and one Social Worker; Oklahoma- One Field Representative; West Virginia- One Labor Management Assistant, and one Director of Negro work; New Jersey- One Labor Relations Assistant; New York State- One Racial Problems Adviser; Virginia- One Adviser and Consultant on Negro Affairs; New York City- One Race Relations Officer.

(24) The Negro and Relief, Article in the FERA Monthly Report for March 1936. A Summary of all race relations factors.

(25) The WPA moving picture "We Work Again" depicts activities of Negro WPA workers exclusively. It has been pronounced the best of such government films. All arrangements, direction and script writing was done by the Race Relations Officer and one of his assistants.

He made no attempt to supervise the special activity Race Relations Offices in the Educational Division, Writers' Project, and NYA, but furnished every possible cooperation, and included their activities in his general reports.

However, Race Relations, still a new government function, remained in a precarious state. Some State Administrators in the South, provoked by charges of the Race Relations Officer that they were harboring race discrimination, complained to the Administrator and urged abolition of the office. The Labor Relations Director championed the cause of Race Relations, and was able to save the office at each reorganization.

The stenographic pool refused to hire a colored stenographer or typist to replace stenographic personnel of the Race Relations Offices, who might be ill or on leave. However, the Race Relations Officer was empowered to appoint colored stenographers as per diem workers to be hired when necessary. This proved unsatisfactory, as the worker invariably found permanent employment with some other agency.

Official dissatisfaction with the conduct of the Central Office's general Race Relations Office was implied in October 1938, when with no previous warning the Assistant WPA Administrator announced a complete reorganization. An "Adviser on Negro Affairs" was appointed to supervise all race matters in the WPA, and the former Race Relations Officer was instructed by memorandum that at the wish of the new Adviser, he was to remain a member of

(26) Maryland- Adviser on Negro Affairs; Pennsylvania- Assistant Recreation Director.

of the Employment Division staff, but definitely responsible to the Adviser
(27)
on Negro Affairs.

The former Race Relations Officer, surprised, could not obtain an audience with the Assistant Administrator, and was never able to get an answer to his questions as to whether his work was unsatisfactory, or the part played by his continued insistence that the Central Office take decisive steps to eliminate apparent race discrimination in the South. His suspicions that pressure from sources wishing the Race Relations Office abolished or conducted on a less militant basis, had at last triumphed, were never officially confirmed. However, the Assistant Administrator had his office Assistant inform the disgruntled Officer that "no actual appointment had ever been made until now to replace the Director of Negro Work who resigned in 1934", and that "members of his own race had advised the reorganization and replacement,
(28)
notably the Race Relations Adviser of the NYA."

(27) T. Arnold Hill, a former Executive of the National Urban League and who served in August and September as a Consultant to the Women's Division of WPA, was appointed Adviser on Negro Affairs, October 25, 1938.

Assistant WPA Administrator Aubrey Williams who was entrusted with supervision of all Race matters by Administrator Hopkins, addressed a belated memo to the former Race Relations Officer on November 14, 1938:

"It is Mr. Hill's wish that you continue to serve as a member of the staff of the Employment Division, handling such matters as he and Mr. David Niles (Director of Employment Division) may determine. However it should be clearly understood that you are responsible to Mr. Hill for all matters involving policy questions in race relations and that he will assume the major responsibility for dealing with the States and with outside organizations on Negro relations.

"I will appreciate it if you will work with Mr. Hill in a cooperative spirit so that the best interests of the Negro in the WPA may be served, and will accept his guidance and direction on the basis outlined above."

(28) Mr. Aubrey Williams, Assistant WPA Administrator, was also Director of the NYA.

In spite of reorganization, race relations in general made forward strides in the Central WPA Office. In addition to the Adviser on Negro Affairs, the Employment Division Race Relations Office had a staff of six, Information Division two, Education Division three, Writers' Project three, National Youth Administration five. A Negro was appointed as Research Assistant in the Historical Records Survey, and one as a Photographer for the (29) Writers' Project. Salaries of Executives and clerical workers were raised, and Negro workers in all categories in the Central Office numbered 88 in October 1938. Before the reorganization in November, the general Race Relations Office had loaned one of its Assistants to the District of Columbia WPA as a Liaison Officer, and the other Assistant in charge of Information made several field trips.

Afield, Ohio joined the States with Race Relations Officers and added a "Field Representative" to the Employment Division of the State administrative staff. The District of Columbia WPA appointed a Negro Curriculum Specialist. Several District offices, including the Los Angeles, California office, added Negro "Coordinators."

Sharp reductions in WPA rolls in mid-1939, coupled with separation of the NYA, resulted in a second reorganization of WPA Central Office Race Relations. The Adviser on Negro Affairs was dismissed "because of necessary reductions", and the former Race Relations Officer resumed general Race Relations duties in addition to his Employment Division and Information Service duties. One of his Assistants was transferred to employment with the District of Columbia WPA as a Consultant on Special Activities in the Women's and

(29) Arnett Lindsay was appointed to supervise collection and cataloging of Historical Records relating to Negroes. Robert McNeill was appointed to travel throughout Virginia and secure photographs for illustrating the Writers' Project Publication "Negroes in Virginia."

Professional Division, the rolls in Washington being three-fourths colored.

By the end of the year, the Negro administrative officers in the Writers' Project and Historical Records Survey, threatened with dismissal because of deemphasis on Federally directed programs, were back at work.

(30)

Eleven States still employed Negro Race Relations Officers.

In 1940, the WPA together with all emergency Agencies, had its personnel reclassified in accordance with Civil Service standards and under supervision of Classification experts. It became apparent that attempts to define the duties of Race Relations Officers in terms of standardized Civil Service procedure were futile. Consequently, titles given Race Relations Officers for pay-roll purposes are singularly non-descriptive of duties performed, and job descriptions inadequate.

Race Relations in WPA shifted to Defense Training in 1940. At the insistence of the Race Relations Officer, general regulations governing defense vocational training projects contained a clause expressly prohibiting race discrimination.

(31)

The Administrator of the Federal Works Agency, who himself employed a Race Relations Officer, evinced interest in WPA race matters and requested information on the possibility of all State WPA Administrators being directed

(30) District of Columbia - Consultant W & P Division, and Curriculum Specialist; Maryland - Adviser on Negro Affairs; New York City - Race Relations Officer; New York State - Director Race Relations; New Jersey - State Supervisor Education; North Carolina - Ass't. in Recreation and Ass't. in Education; Ohio - Field Representative in Employment; Oklahoma - Supervisor for Negroes; Pennsylvania - Race Relations Officer and Ass't. in Recreation; West Virginia - Supervisor of Recreation and Education.

(31) General Letter No. 319, July 1940

"Persons who are qualified and eligible for assignment to this project shall not be discriminated against because of race, creed, or color, or for any other reason."

to employ Negroes on their administrative staffs. Although there was considerable discussion by all concerned, nothing came of this proposal. Further sharp reduction of the rolls resulted in the dismissal of a number of State Race Relations Officers. However, the District of Columbia, with its rolls from two-thirds to three-fourths colored, hired an additional Curriculum Specialist and a Supervisor of Education for Negroes. In Illinois, a satisfactory arrangement had been reached earlier in the Program, where-under the Chicago Urban League served as Adviser and Consultant on Negro Affairs, (32) without compensation. This plan was effective, but did not meet the approval of Negro leaders in general, who believed the job should be full-time and (33) paid.

The Central Office Race Relations staff was reduced as the Writers' Project and Historical Records Survey terminated most national activity. This proved costly as the next in the series of the Writers' Project Negro series contained a number of inaccuracies which were noted by the Negro public and press. The clerical staff of the Race Relations Office was reduced, and one (34) stenographer loaned to the Director of Labor Relations.

Gradual reduction during 1941 and 1942 saw the Race Relations staff (35) shrink to two persons, the Race Relations Officer and his secretary.

(32) The Urban League is a social-work and economic welfare organization for Negroes, with branches in most industrial cities.

(33) Urban League Branch Directors conferred with the Commissioners of FWA and WPA in late 1941, and followed up their petitions for appointment of more State Race Relations Officers, with additional petitions in 1941.

(34) Director Nels Anderson of the Labor Relations Section consistently set an example of democracy by employing a Negro stenographer in his work.

(35) The secretary, Leona Cobb, was reclassified and promoted to an Assistant to do Information Service work in Race Relations.

Other staff members secured employment in other government agencies or private industry. The Specialist on Negro Education transferred his activities first to Recreation and finally to FWA matters concerned with operation of various types of War Centers.

Agitation attended the dismissal of State Race Relations Officers, but reduction of State budgets provided no alternative.

Designation of the FWA Administrator as Commissioner of WPA created a cooperation between the FWA and WPA Race Relations Offices amounting to partial integration. Just prior to the order liquidating the WPA program, the WPA Race Relations Officer made a field trip to key cities in four geographical sections to ascertain the fare of Negro workers in the Training and Reemployment Program.

With regulations prohibiting racial discrimination, and a Race Relations staff in the Central and some State and District offices, the WPA strove to put equity on a par with efficiency in the administration of the program. Some discrimination on account of race and color nevertheless flourished in varying degrees from inception in 1935 to liquidation in 1943. Happily, the most of it appeared to be unwitting.

The provision of adequate employment opportunities on WPA projects for eligible Negro workers involved certain peculiar difficulties. The maintenance of healthy race-labor relations also had its peculiar problems. It was often difficult to secure necessary sponsors for all-Negro projects in areas where State laws compel racial separation. Work experience of most Negro workers, especially women, made provision of suitable project employment relatively difficult. Presence of lone or relatively few Negro white collar

workers in some Southern sections, made it necessary to set up "one man" projects or refuse the eligible worker assignment in his classification. Presence of relatively large numbers of Negro white collar workers in large urban areas who were college and similarly trained, coupled with reluctance of most sponsors to accept Negro research and clerical workers, contributed to the problem.

Also WPA State staffs were for the most part composed of residents of the State and thoroughly in accord with its patterns and traditions of race. Prejudices against Negroes resulted. For the most part these prejudices were subtle,- a relaxation of rules in favor of whites and rigid application in the case of Negroes.
(36)

It was generally accepted that Negroes had always lived on less than comperable whites, and therefore should reasonably be expected to get along on a smaller relief budget or WPA wage. Opposition to paying Negro teachers, nurses, and the like, on WPA projects the same wage received by whites was particularly bitter in States where a differential wage based on race customarily prevailed. Federal direction forbade such differentials, but vestiges survived until liquidation, in the practice of designating many Negro professional and white-collar workers "Junior" and most whites as "Senior". In New Orleans, several hundred Negro women shared jobs, two to a WPA wage, and were its chief defenders, holding the halved wage infinitely desirable to domestic and personal service wages.
(37)

(36) See Negro and Relief, FEPA Monthly Report, March 1936; also Race of WPA Workers, - a Study prepared by the Division of Social Research for the National Resources Planning Board in July 1940.

(37) See WPA Records, Correspondence Files, or Race Relations Office Monthly Reports.

Analysis and investigation of complaints from Negro workers received in the Central Office and referred to the Race Relations Office, revealed that fully one-half were more labor-relations cases than race-relations, based on lack of information, misunderstandings, and the like. Others undoubtedly involved unfairness based on race.

Negro women, whose peculiar work history made them the most difficult of all workers to provide with adequate assignments, were sometimes dismissed from employment because local housewives complained of a scarcity of domestic labor and offer to pay them from \$2.00 to \$4.00 a week. (38) Negro workers were sometimes refused certification on recommendation of WPA officials, as in St. Louis where no Negro women were eligible for certification who "had not had industrial employment within five years". (39) Except on all-Negro Education, Recreation, and Research Projects, Negro supervisory and non-relief personnel was practically non-existent. Seasonal employment was a chronic race relations sore spot. Investigation revealed actual instances where Negro workers with white-collar work experience were cut off WPA projects because farm work was available. (40) It was the chief topic of race discrimination complaint, with discrimination against the Negro as a skilled worker a close second.

Other race factors entered the work relief picture. Various Congressmen and Mayors of some large urban centers in the North frequently complained of migration of indigent Negroes from the South for the express purpose

(38) See WPA Records, Correspondence Files, or Race Relations Office Monthly Reports.

(39) Ibid.

(40) Ibid.

of getting on relief rolls and the WPA in the North where WPA wages were higher. Investigation of these charges failed to substantiate them. (41) Singularly few Negro workers possessed birth certificates or other credentials and on this account found it difficult to prove eligibility. In many communities WPA projects were sought to provide public facilities which, however, were not intended for use by Negro citizens. This was true of Southern libraries, parks, etc., but had its counterpart in Northern community houses, swimming pools, etc. WPA frequently found itself faced with the decision of building a public facility for whites only and thereby subscribing to race discrimination, building equal and separate accommodations for Negroes, which involved additional sponsorship, or refusing to participate.

Regularly, every two years, politics mixed with race in relief.

Pivotal-State politicians boldly advertised the "end of WPA" in the Negro press if their opponents were elected, and promised a WPA job to every Negro worker who wanted one, provided he was elected. (42) The WPA Administrator's 1938

letter, enclosed in the pay envelopes of all project workers apprising them of their right to vote despite any advice to the contrary, was interpreted by some Southern Negro workers as a repeal of the poll tax and other disfranchisement devices, with resultant confusion and conflict. (43)

Racial discrimination in work relief undoubtedly resulted largely from factors over which Federal direction of the WPA program had no direct control. It could and did correct individual and some group instances of unfairness

(41) See Chicago Urban League Study on this matter, made in cooperation with University of Chicago.

(42) See Race Relations Monthly Reports October and November 1938, and others.

(43) See Race Relations Monthly Report May 1938.

based on race, but it could not, of necessity, change national patterns responsible. However, the Negro measuring the good and the evil of work relief rightly regards the WPA era as a Godsend.

The WPA saved the unemployed Negro worker from privation and want, and in a great many instances from actual starvation. It preserved his morale. It conserved and enhanced his skills, and provided him training in types of work in which private industry had refused him opportunity for apprenticeship and at the same time refused him employment because he lacked experience. The amazing fact that the "security wage" raised the living standard of the Negro mass to a degree which can only be determined by historians and economists from a long-range future view, is a commentary on the disparity between the economic status of the white and colored populations.

WPA provided the Negro public with services hitherto unavailable, through its construction projects and through its special programs.

It may be concluded, also, that Negro WPA workers despite any "atmosphere of distrust and humiliation" attendant to relief work, and in spite of the handicap of being non-white, made a notable record as project and administrative workers. They exhibited no appreciable tendency toward becoming chronically dependent on relief, in spite of some denial of reasonable economic opportunity.

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